

UNIVERSITY PLACE *Sports Extra*

The Stuff of Legends

BY DANA L. COOKE

IN 1959, LEGENDARY SU coach Ben Schwartzwalder led his legendary Orangemen to an undefeated regular season, a Cotton Bowl victory, and the University's only, legendary national championship in football.

In the annals of Syracuse football, that is the stuff of legends. But did they who played those games and they who watched those games understand, as the events unfolded, that legend was in the making? I don't know; I was not there. On November 7 of that year, when the Orange prevailed over Penn State in the season's pinnacle showdown, thereby first gaining the Associated Press's number-one rating, I was busy elsewhere. I was being born. Undoubtedly the team was Herculean, the fans delighted. But my own memories of the day are hazy.

In the 28 years since—in all the time it takes a future editor to grow up, survive school, and learn his craft—1959 has remained the highest peak on the landscape of SU football; no matter how far the program travels, 1959 has remained in sight, towering above the trees. We whose entire lives post-date it had come to wonder, would the past ever yield to the present? Would we ever witness a season whose standards live up to the legend of '59?

Yes we would, in 1987.

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WE OWE A DEBT TO the 1959 squad—they provided a reference point. Because this year's events withstood comparison with those of 1959, we understood, even as it happened, that the 1987 season was legendary.

Given advance appreciation of this, we ought to make a gesture to posterity. We ought to assemble a Football Time Capsule and date it 1987. We'd collect a few indispensable mementos of the season, place them in a small box, and bury it somewhere on the Quad, for future generations to enjoy. They'll know, 28 years from now, that the splendor of the moment was not lost

on us. They'll know that we recognized a legend when we saw one.

In this Time Capsule we would place:

2,000 Ties. After Auburn coach Pat Dye opted for the Sugar Bowl-tying field goal, Syracuse radio station Y-94 urged fans to send in their old ties—the oldest and ugliest they could find. On January 14, large bags containing the ties arrived in Dye's office, a humorous gesture of disdain for the 16-16 score. Dye, unimpressed, autographed and sold the ties, with proceeds given to the Auburn scholarship fund. Auburn fans sent back a shipment of sour grapes.

Similarly, we'd include entries to a local newspaper's "Name That Bird" contest—another exercise in public catharsis, aimed at renaming the Auburn War Eagle mascot. "Bore Eagle" was the winner.

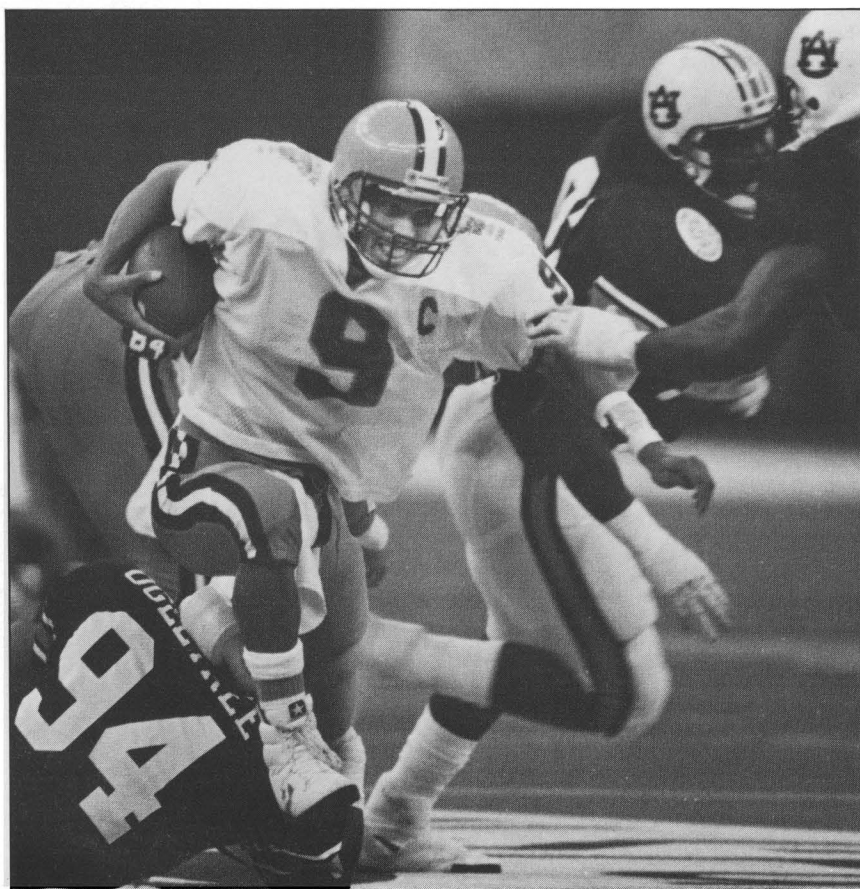
Awards. Lots of awards. Quarterback Don McPherson did *not* win the Heisman Trophy, a fact that prompted the selection committee to reexamine its procedures. Instead, on behalf of the Heisman, we'll include the mask of Pittsburgh running back Craig Heyward that McPherson sported at the Heisman ceremony.

McPherson's many other awards can go in the box, though. He won

by a wide margin the Maxwell Trophy as the outstanding college football player of the year. The first-ever Johnny Unitas Award, recognizing leadership and citizenship, bears his name. McPherson was the All-America quarterback of the Associated Press, *Sporting News*, Kodak team, and a number of others. He was the Sugar Bowl MVP.

His coach, Dick MacPherson, has most of the awards; we'll need another box for them. "Coach Mac" earned the Bear Bryant Award for college coach of the year, and similar honors from the Associated Press, United Press International, the *Sporting News*, *Sports Illustrated*, the Walter Camp organization, and the American Football Coaches Association. In fact, MacPherson collected every major coach-of-the-year award in the country.

Defensive lineman Ted Gregory also snared a number of All-America credits—the UPI, *Football*



The Mac Attack on New Year's Day.

News, and Football Writers' Association included. Various honorable mentions went to Rob Burnett, Tommy Kane, Markus Paul, Terry Wooden, Tim Vesling, and others. Whatever plaques or statues came with them go into our time capsule.

The Press Clips. We'll leave out the routine, day-to-day coverage of the games. We're interested only in those stories appearing on the wires and in national publications—those that brought Syracuse to the nation's attention in 1987, casting over SU the sort of glow ordinarily associated with Oklahomas, USC's, and Notre Dames.

We'd get copies of *Time* magazine's November 16 article, "Carried Away in Syracuse"; *Sports Illustrated's* glowing profile of Don McPherson, "A Touch of Class," December 14 (and a similar *People* piece); the Knight-Ridder wire item in December proclaiming Syracuse the Sports Capital of

the World, and the *U.S. News and World Report's* January 25 feature on player recruiting, whose central case study was SU assistant coach Randy Edsall, and many more. It will take another box, we think.

Ted Gregory's Knee Brace. Nose guard Gregory, considered the cornerstone of the defense, went down in SU's defeat of Colgate. He missed all but a few plays of the remaining four games, and played only half of the Sugar Bowl. His absence may have allowed West Virginia to stay close in the season opener. Perhaps it kept Auburn in the game as well.

Scott Healy's SU Teeshirt. By which we'll remember SU's 48-21 stomping of Penn State. Prior to the game, Healy, director of admissions at State, and David Smith, deans of admissions at SU, made a friendly wager. Each promised that, if his team lost, he would wear the opponent's colors, publicly, for

a full week. Healy later threatened to turn his Syracuse teeshirt inside-out. But before delivering it, Smith had the shirt twice inscribed: outside, "Syracuse University"; inside, "I Lost the Bet."

Most of All, Moments. We'd like to put in the box Rob Moore's 80-yard, game-opening touchdown reception against Penn State; Robert Drummond's 55-yard option pass, which was the season's first play from scrimmage; a few of Markus Paul's five interceptions; Tommy Kane's still-incredible mid-air touchdown reception in the Penn State game; and, most of all, the Pat Kelly touchdown and Michael Owen's two-point conversion that won the thrilling West Virginia game.

Of course, we can't capture moments in a box. So we'll settle for 60 minutes of VHS—the commemorative videotape prepared and now offered for sale by the SU Orange Pack. It captures all the

season's most thrilling punts, passes, and kicks, and if we can get it into the box without first wearing it out it will certainly preserve our excitement.

WE'D ADD SOME OF the more predictable memorabilia—the game balls, hero's jerseys, Drummond's paint-scarred helmet, various banners and baubles, and a few souvenirs of Bourbon Street revelry. We'd throw in tapes of Y-94's popular song parodies, "The Lion Weeps Tonight" and "Donnie Mac." We'd clip the final AP poll from a Syracuse paper, showing Syracuse, 11-0-1, ranked fourth.

But now we've dug up the entire Quad. Our little box has turned into a truckful of crates and cartons—it was that kind of season.

So instead of a time capsule, we'll tuck away in our hearts the knowledge that we witnessed a football legend in 1987, and we knew it.

HOW IT WENT

SU 25, Maryland 11

Underdog SU dominated the home opener; Tim Vesling kicked four field goals.

SU 20, Rutgers 3

Led by Ted Gregory, SU's defense held the Scarlet Knights to 161 yards.

SU 24, Miami 10

Don McPherson passed for 271 yards; Markus Paul hauled in two interceptions.

SU 35, Virginia Tech 21

SU dominated the second half, overcoming a 21-7 deficit; Tech was held to -1 rushing yards.

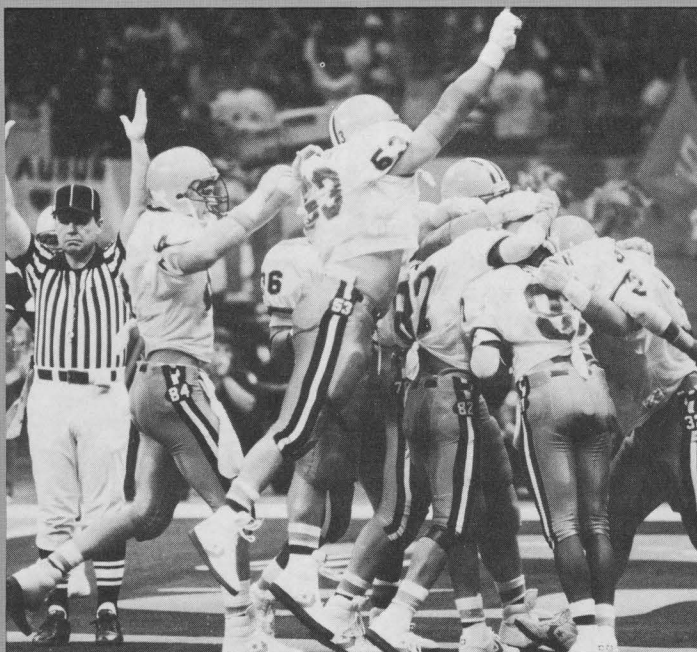
SU 24, Missouri 13

SU collected five Tiger fumbles; Rob Moore's 71-yard TD reception provided the lead.

SU 48, Penn State 21

Sparked by Moore's 80-yard game-opening TD, SU whipped the Lions, snapping

DAVID MCCLAIN



a 17-year streak; Vesling broke the NCAA's team consecutive PAT record.

SU 52, Colgate 6

Tommy Kane receptions added up to 193 yards and four TDs.

SU 24, Pittsburgh 10

The offense's 441 yards included 91 by Robert Drummond, on 11 carries.

SU 34, Navy 10

Fullback Daryl Johnston scored twice as the SU offense totaled 455 yards.

SU 45, Boston College 17

After spotting BC 17 points, SU scored seven straight times to earn its Sugar Bowl nod.

SU 32, W. Virginia 31

With 10 seconds left, tight end Pat Kelly scored; Michael Owens' two-point conversion preserved victory and a perfect regular season.

SU 13, Auburn 13

Auburn coach Pat Dye made a controversial game-tying choice, and the 1988 Sugar Bowl ended in anticlimax. "We didn't tie them, they tied us," was SU's refrain.

The SU Orange Pack has prepared "Team on a Mission," a 60-minute VHS videocassette reviewing the 1987 regular season and Sugar Bowl. Copies are available for \$29.95 (plus \$4 postage and handling) from SU Orange Pack, Manley Field House, Syracuse, N.Y. 13244-5020 (checks payable to Syracuse University).